



SECURE

Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment

SECURE2 Bulletin – June 2026

Reshaping Research Careers



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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Establishing the SECURE2 Baseline: Maturity Mapping Throughout the Pilots

The SECURE2 project has completed its first major milestone: a comprehensive baseline assessment of research career policies and practices across its eight pilot institutions. Conducted through a harmonised self-assessment process, the maturity mapping provides an evidence base for designing tailored support measures and monitoring progress throughout the project's four-year implementation phase.

The assessment covered eight action areas aligned with the Research Career Framework (RCF): Strategy, Stability, Working Conditions, Skills Development, Mobility, Assessment, Career Pathways, and Interoperability. Together, these dimensions offer a comprehensive picture of how research careers are currently supported across participating institutions and help identify both existing strengths and areas requiring further development. Overall, the consortium achieved a maturity level between the "Initiating" and "Developing" stages, although the results revealed considerable variation between institutions, with some already demonstrating well-established practices in several areas.

Working Conditions emerged as the consortium's strongest area, reflecting solid HR frameworks, clear contractual arrangements, and supportive institutional practices that provide a strong foundation for future reforms. By contrast, Stability, Mobility, and Interoperability were identified as the most significant challenges, highlighting the need for more predictable career pathways, stronger opportunities for international and intersectoral mobility, and closer alignment with European frameworks such as the European Research

Area (ERA), CoARA, and the ERA Talent Platform.

Rather than serving solely as an assessment exercise, the maturity mapping is intended to support institutional learning and guide the implementation of change. The results will enable SECURE2 partners to tailor their activities according to the specific needs of each pilot institution, while also encouraging peer learning between organisations with different levels of experience and capacity. In this way, the consortium aims to ensure that reforms are both evidence-based and responsive to local contexts.

The findings will now inform the next phase of the project, including the development of institutional action plans, capacity-building activities, and pilot implementation of the Research Career Framework. By systematically strengthening research career structures across diverse organisations, SECURE2 seeks to contribute to a more sustainable, transparent, and interconnected European research ecosystem.



SECURE2 consortium meets in Szczecin

On 18–19 May 2026, SECURE2 partners gathered in Szczecin, Poland, for the 2026 Steering Committee Meeting, hosted by the West Pomeranian University of Technology (ZUT). The meeting provided an opportunity to review progress achieved during the project's first year, discuss ongoing activities, and coordinate the next steps towards strengthening sustainable research careers across Europe.

The agenda focused on recent European policy developments, implementation of the SECURE Research Career Framework (RCF), institutional analysis, and the co-creation activities supporting pilot actions across partner organisations. Consortium members exchanged experiences, shared progress, and identified priorities for the coming project period.

A dedicated session with representatives of Eurodoc, ICoRSA, and the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) explored key challenges related to research careers, with discussions centred on improving support mechanisms for researchers and advancing the implementation of the Research Career Framework within the European Research Area.

The meeting concluded with updates from the project work packages, discussions on cooperation with sister projects and the Advisory Board, and planning of future activities aimed at maximising the long-term impact of SECURE2 and supporting institutional reforms across participating organisations.



Project team in Szczecin, Poland, 18–19 May 2026.

SECURE2 Workshop on the Research Career Framework Held in Szczecin

The Sustainable Careers for Research Empowerment (SECURE2) project held its General Assembly on 18–19 May 2026 in Szczecin, Poland, hosted by the West Pomeranian University of Technology (ZUT). As part of the programme, researchers from all career stages (R1–R4) participated in a dedicated workshop on the SECURE Research Career Framework (RCF), discussing which elements of the framework are most needed and how they can be effectively implemented at their institutions. Organised by the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA), Eurodoc, and ICoRSA, the online workshop brought together 25 participants.

The discussions identified transparency, clear career pathways, supportive management, and fair pay as the highest priorities for career development and the implementation of tenure-track models. Participants also highlighted the importance of creating more integrated career pathways across academia, industry, and government, while noting that underfunding and the widespread use of short-term contracts continue to hinder long-term career development and institutional reform.

The workshop also addressed advocacy and policy engagement, emphasising the role of researcher associations in connecting European policies with local implementation. Participants identified the underrepresentation of early-career researchers in decision-making, limited recognition of advocacy work, and low awareness of engagement opportunities as key challenges that must be addressed to strengthen research careers across Europe.

Eurodoc Board Meeting and SECURE2 Workshops Held at Cracow University of Technology

On 30–31 January 2026, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the Cracow University of Technology hosted a meeting of the Board of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc), combined with workshops organised as part of the SECURE2 project. Bringing together Eurodoc Board members and SECURE2 partners, the event focused on key challenges and opportunities related to research careers in Europe and provided a platform for exchanging perspectives on the future implementation of the European Research Career Framework.

The SECURE2 workshops explored topics including the pilot implementation of the Research Career Framework in research-performing organisations, the development of tailored institutional action plans, co-creation activities involving researchers, research managers, and administrative staff, and stronger cooperation between academic and non-academic sectors. The meeting reinforced the shared commitment of Eurodoc and the SECURE2 consortium to advancing more sustainable, attractive, and inclusive research careers across Europe.

RESEARCH CAREERS IN EUROPE

Postdoctoral Skills for Industry and Innovation at REDS Conference

Postdoctoral researchers play a crucial role in developing the advanced skills needed for industries driving sustainable innovation. At the recent REDS conference, the UK's largest postdoctoral development programme, C-DICE (Centre for Postdoctoral Development in Infrastructure, Cities and Energy) presented its Net Zero Skills Framework—a free tool designed to help researchers identify transferable skills, explore career pathways beyond academia, and better align their expertise with industry needs. The framework focuses on leadership, research and innovation, collaboration, systems thinking, and digital literacy, reflecting the competencies increasingly sought by employers.

Supporting postdoctoral researchers across 18 UK universities, C-DICE offers training, fellowships, industrial secondments, and funding opportunities to strengthen career development in the Infrastructure, Cities, and Energy sectors. More information is available in the [C-DICE blog post](#) and the accompanying [journal publication on postdoctoral skills for net-zero industries](#).

Webinar: The Cost of Researcher Precarity – Key Findings from the C-DICE Survey

On 13 March 2026, the online webinar “The Cost of Researcher Precarity”, organised as part of the C-DICE project, presented the key findings and recommendations from a survey examining precarity and fixed-term employment in UK higher education. Bringing together researchers, policymakers, research managers, and higher education professionals, the event

explored how contract length, employment gaps, and institutional practices affect career development, employment continuity, financial security, and researchers' overall well-being.

Drawing on the survey results, speakers highlighted differences in how precarity is experienced across academia and presented evidence-based recommendations for higher education institutions, research funders, and policymakers. For the SECURE2 community, the webinar offered valuable insights into the structural challenges affecting research careers and contributed to ongoing discussions on creating more stable, inclusive, and sustainable working environments for researchers.

New Surveys on Research Careers and Talent Support in Health Innovation

As part of the BREATH project, which aims to strengthen career development and talent support in Health Innovation across Europe, two new surveys have been launched to gather insights into research careers and institutional support. One survey targets PhD holders and early-career researchers, inviting them to share their experiences, career aspirations, and challenges during and after their doctoral studies. The second is aimed at organisations across academia, industry, and public administration, focusing on how they support researcher development, career progression, and talent retention.

By bringing together perspectives from both researchers and institutions, the initiative seeks to identify gaps between skills, expectations, and labour market needs. The findings will inform future recommendations and contribute to the development of more effective policies and practices for research careers across Europe.

Researchers can participate in the survey [HERE](#), while organisations can access their

survey [HERE](#). All relevant stakeholders are encouraged to take part and contribute to shaping a more responsive and supportive research and innovation ecosystem.

[Exploring sustainable research careers at the Marie Curie Alumni Association Annual Conference 2026](#)

On 24 April 2026, the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) held a session on sustainable research careers as part of its [Annual Conference 2026](#). This one-hour discussion brought together representatives from the European Commission, the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Association, and the International Consortium of Research Staff Associations (ICoRSA) to explore the evolution of Research Career Frameworks in Europe.

The session highlighted the need to move European research careers towards more sustainable and diverse pathways, building on initiatives such as SECURE2 and the COST Cross-Cutting Activities (CCA). It covered policy efforts on tenure-track models, skills recognition (including ResearchComp), and mobility and visa-related challenges across Europe. Participants stressed the importance of stronger funding, better implementation of existing frameworks, and greater recognition of non-linear research careers.

As part of the Annual Conference, the MCAA also hosted a SECURE2 booth, where attendees could learn more about the project and the SECURE Research Career Framework.



MCAA Annual Conference, Brussels, Belgium (22-25 April 2026)

[Vitae Report Highlights Gaps in Measuring Researcher Development Impact](#)

A [new report](#) published by Vitae examines current practices and key challenges in measuring the impact of researcher development activities across the sector. Based on a survey of 51 researcher development professionals in the United Kingdom conducted in autumn 2025, the report identifies career development and progression as the primary goal of these activities.

While most institutions collect data on participation and engagement, the report finds that far fewer are able to demonstrate researchers' long-term career progression or the lasting impact of development initiatives. Only a small number of respondents reported having robust evidence in this area.

The report argues that current evaluation approaches rely too heavily on short-term, quantitative indicators and calls for more longitudinal and narrative-based methods that better capture the complexity of researcher development over time.

These findings contribute to ongoing discussions on how to better assess and communicate the value of researcher development activities.

Budapest as a Host of Eurodoc Annual Conference 2026

The Eurodoc Annual Conference 2026, titled “Early Career Researchers as Ambassadors for Science and Society,” took place on 24–25 June in Budapest, Hungary, bringing together doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, policymakers, and representatives of research organisations from across Europe. Organised by Eurodoc in collaboration with the Association of Hungarian PhD and DLA Candidates (DOSZ) and hosted by Semmelweis University, the conference explored the role of early-career researchers in strengthening the relationship between science and society.

The programme featured keynote speeches, panel discussions, and interactive workshops on topics including academic governance, researcher representation, public engagement with science, and the future of research careers in Europe. The discussions reinforced themes closely aligned with the SECURE2 project, highlighting the importance of supporting sustainable research careers, empowering early-career researchers, and strengthening the impact of research on society.



Photo: Tobias Reich/Unsplash

OUTREACH AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

From Research to Policy: SECURE2 Presented at Young Scientists Congress in Lviv

On 5 March 2026, the SECURE2 project was presented at the Congress of Young Scientists, “Youth Science for Policy”, held at Lviv State University of Life Safety in Ukraine. Organised by the Young Scientists Council at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the event brought together more than 100 participants from universities, research institutions, and public bodies to discuss how research can better inform public policy and address societal and security challenges.

During the Congress, SECURE2 team member Oleksandr Berezko delivered a presentation highlighting the role of early-career researchers as drivers of institutional and policy change. By presenting its work on the European Framework for Research Careers, reducing precarity, and strengthening research ecosystems, SECURE2 contributed to discussions on building more sustainable research careers and empowering young scientists to play a more active role in shaping the future of research and public policy.



SECURE2 at Young Scientists Congress in Lviv

SECURE2 Showcased at FAUBAI 2026 in Brazil

From 12 to 15 April 2026, the SECURE2 project was presented by the Instituto Superior Técnico at FAUBAI 2026, Brazil's leading conference on higher education internationalisation and one of the most influential events of its kind in Latin America. The conference brought together a large and highly qualified audience of university leaders, international relations professionals, researchers, policymakers, funding agencies, and representatives of international organisations from across the world.

As a key platform for international academic cooperation and institutional partnerships, FAUBAI provided an important opportunity to increase the visibility of SECURE2 beyond Europe, engage with stakeholders from the Latin American higher education and research ecosystem, and promote the project's objectives to a broad international audience.



Rui Mendez at FAUBAI, Brussels, Florianópolis, Brazil (12-15 April 2026)

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